

110TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 202

Noting the absence of human rights as a topic of discussion in the U.S.-Saudi Strategic Dialogue between the United States and Saudi Arabia, and urging the President to include this subject in working level discussions with Saudi counterparts.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 3, 2007

Mr. DELAHUNT (for himself, Mr. ROHRABACHER, Mr. CROWLEY, and Mr. BERMAN) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Noting the absence of human rights as a topic of discussion in the U.S.-Saudi Strategic Dialogue between the United States and Saudi Arabia, and urging the President to include this subject in working level discussions with Saudi counterparts.

Whereas President George W. Bush and His Excellency King Abdullah Abdul Aziz al-Saud agreed in May 2005 to establish a U.S.-Saudi Strategic Dialogue (“Strategic Dialogue”) under which the United States and Saudi Arabia would convene talks every 6 months;

Whereas Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Minister of Foreign Affairs Prince Saud Al-Faisal created 6 working groups under the Strategic Dialogue’s auspices to “deal

with functional issues and provide an institutional framework through which officials from a number of departments and Ministries from both governments work to constructively and comprehensively address a range of issues of importance to both countries”;

Whereas the working groups meet on an “as needed” basis and address the following topics: counterterrorism; military affairs; energy; economic and financial affairs; consular affairs; and partnership, education, exchange, and human development;

Whereas the United States Department of State’s Human Rights Report on Saudi Arabia in 2007 found severe human rights abuses, including the infliction of severe pain by judicially-sanctioned corporal punishments; arbitrary arrest and detention; denial of fair public trials; exemption from the rule of law and lack of judicial independence; arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home, and correspondence; significant restriction of civil liberties such as freedoms of speech and press, including the Internet; assembly; association and movement, and minimal political rights, including no right to peacefully change the government;

Whereas Freedom House has rated Saudi Arabia as a “Not Free” country for the past 34 years, and has consistently cited it as one of the 8 worst regimes in the world due to the severe restrictions on civil liberties and political rights, including a ban on political parties, tight government control over domestic media outlets, absence of religious freedom, academic freedom, or judicial independence;

Whereas there is widespread legal and societal discrimination and violence against women, including a denial of equal

educational opportunities, and severe work, dress and freedom of movement restrictions;

Whereas the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom listed Saudi Arabia as a “Country of Particular Concern” in its 2007 report because there is no legal recognition or protection of religious freedom, it is severely restricted in practice; the government limits the practice of all but the officially sanctioned version of Islam and prohibits the public practice of other religions, including non-Muslim religions and Shi’a and Sufi sects;

Whereas the Department of State’s 2007 Trafficking in Persons Report identified Saudi Arabia as a “Tier 3” category country, the poorest rating, due to its failure to take steps to eliminate involuntary servitude, particularly of domestic servants and to a lesser extent, commercial sexual exploitation;

Whereas the promotion of human rights across the globe and especially in the Middle East furthers United States security interests;

Whereas President Bush stated in his Second Inaugural Address that “We will encourage reform in other governments by making clear that success in our relations will require the decent treatment of their own people.”; and

Whereas President Bush stated in his Prague speech on June 5, 2007, “The United States is also using our influence to urge valued partners like Egypt and Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to move toward freedom. . . . The United States will continue to press nations like these to open up their political systems, and give greater voice to their people. Inevitably, this creates tension. But our relationships

with these countries are broad enough and deep enough to bear it.”: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring), That Congress—*

3 (1) commends the President for establishing the
4 U.S.-Saudi Strategic Dialogue (“Strategic Dia-
5 logue”) to address mutual interests between the
6 United States and Saudi Arabia;

7 (2) expresses dismay that the Department of
8 State did not originally include human rights as a
9 topic of discussion;

10 (3) applauds the President for stating in
11 Prague that the “United States will continue to
12 press” Saudi Arabia “to give greater voice to their
13 people,” since freedom of expression is a vital
14 human right;

15 (4) agrees with the President’s statement in
16 Prague that the relationship between the United
17 States and Saudi Arabia “is broad enough and deep
18 enough” to sustain a meaningful conversation about
19 human rights;

20 (5) concludes that the Strategic Dialogue is the
21 logical mechanism through which to discuss the pro-
22 motion of human rights in Saudi Arabia; and

- 1 (6) calls upon the President and the Secretary
- 2 of State to expand the Strategic Dialogue and estab-
- 3 lish a new working group to address human rights.

